

## New Association for NHSC Alumni: Continued Opportunities for Service

An exciting new grassroots organization, the NHSC Alumni and Support Network (NASN), is being developed by and for NHSC alumni, scholars and providers. NASN's vision is "to enhance the development and support of those health professions students and clinicians affiliated with the NHSC, as well as others in support of its mission."

As part of NHSC's 1995 national initiative, "Creating a Road Map for the Future," participants discussed the future of health care reform and the role of the NHSC in shaping that future. One critical factor resurfaced throughout the discussion: the largely untapped resource of NHSC alumni.

Of particular interest were the ways NHSC clinicians can change the national health care landscape, using their considerable strength and specialized knowledge to influence legislators and the public, and to provide a support network for current providers to the underserved.

Megan Eagle, FNP, an NHSC alumna and current NASN member, explains. "Those of us who provide health care to the underserved face practical,

professional and personal challenges on a daily basis."

These challenges include needing knowledge of a myriad of private and public resources for patients, providing crisis counseling, learning management skills quickly, and even relocating to unfamiliar communities. "Our experiences are worth sharing with each other," she says, "to avoid reinventing wheels, to generate new solutions, and to provide support and inspiration."

In response to these needs and opportunities, NASN formed in January 1996 as an independent, self-supporting, tax-exempt organization. David Greene, MD, explains why NASN's philosophy motivated him to get involved. "The mission of caring for the underserved is one that allows unswerving devotion. It allows us to focus on the best part of health care: its tradition of service to others."

Greene believes it is this commitment to service, a commitment that exists above and beyond any financial obligation, that will bring and hold the alumni together. "Many of us, as NHSC alumni, were looking for an



organization to help us continue our vocation of service after our commitments to the NHSC were completed and our careers had diverged," he says. Greene, who is one of NASN's founding members, currently serves as Board Chair.

NASN is committed to promoting the philosophy of the NHSC and supporting clinicians in the field. NASN has been specifically challenged to build a viable and extensive membership as part of the NHSC 25th Anniversary Initiative. It is reaching out to alumni across the country to invite them to become active in this endeavor.

Scott Wolpin, DDS, an NHSC alumnus and Board member, expects the group's importance to grow. "As more people are rolled into managed care insurance programs, the entire definition and demographics of who is actually underserved will evolve," he explains. "Even those in private practice will need to acquire specialized skills in order to provide care to people with a history of barriers in accessing care, and with subsequently advanced pathologies."

It is precisely this type of need that NASN hopes to answer. "I would ask current NHSC providers to think of where they may be after their commitment is over. What will the Nation's health care landscape be like?" Wolpin believes that this new organization offers clinicians the opportunity to effect lasting change on that landscape.

### Calling All Alumni:

NASN invites and encourages NHSC alumni to contact them during this anniversary year to join the organization and profile their careers.

NASN has contracted with the Bernard Harris Company of White Plains, N.Y., to produce a *25th Anniversary Commemorative Directory of NHSC Alumni*. NASN encourages all alumni to respond to this solicitation for information. This directory will be a networking tool for alumni and others wishing to contact them.

Individuals and groups from all disciplines, as well as community advocates, are also invited to become members and provide their input on future direction and initiatives for this organization. Membership fees vary.

NASN can be reached by the following methods:

- Internet: Use [www.clinicians.org/nhsc25.html](http://www.clinicians.org/nhsc25.html) and select "Getting Involved."
- Fax-on-Demand: Call toll-free (888) 228-3294, use PIN code 99# and document number 998.
- Phone: Call (606) 263-0046.